

Feel Like Roommates With Your Spouse? Here's What To Do



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With Your Host

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Welcome to Mom On Purpose, where it's all about helping moms overcome challenges and live their best lives. My hope is by being here, you are more inspired to become the mom you are made to be. I'm Natalie, your host, a wife, mom, dog mama, Chicagoan, and former lawyer turned professionally certified coach. If you're here to grow, I can help. Let's go.

Hello, my beautiful friends. Welcome to the podcast to talk about the really fun topic, of feeling like roommates with your husband. Do you feel like you are in this roommate phase? I completely get it. I have coached so many women on this and it's kind of like there's nothing really wrong. Like it's not so bad where you would describe it as, you know, you're having problems in your marriage or anything like that. It's subtle, it's small, but it impacts pretty much your entire relationship with your husband.

There's not really this sense of like strong connection because there's not a lot of space devoted to just you two. And again, you probably wouldn't describe it as something being like terribly wrong. On the other hand though, you wouldn't describe your marriage right now as just being so connected where you're really focused on each other. Maybe you would describe it as just being really focused on the kids or, you know, just being in a busy season of life or something. Like you're not necessarily fighting but you're not connecting either. You know, maybe you pass each other in the hallway, for example, and you're coordinating schedules and you're talking about what's for dinner. But there's not that pause, that emotional connection, that romance. Maybe you would describe it as being faded or just not there in this busy season. And some of you might describe it like you're living as roommates, but others of you wouldn't even say that even though the symptoms reflect that.

It just depends on kinda you personally and how you would sum up what's going on. But the symptoms would all be the same. Meaning there's not that connection. It's very much focused on responsibility and logistics and the important stuff in terms of running a household together, which I often compare to running a business or you know, running a team if you're in corporate or something like that. But it's missing the part that we don't see

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when you're running a business or a team, which is that romance, that emotional connection and that intimacy. So what I want you to know is that it does not have to stay this way, and it's not going to require a weekly date night or some prescription that I am going to tell you that you have to do. That is, is something you've heard a million times and you know, just doesn't feel like exactly what you needed.

So what I am going to share with you is like a different perspective on it and a different way to think about it that I think could be really, really powerful. So I want you to picture this. You are sitting on your couch, you're scrolling your phone, your husband is there, he's watching tv, the kids are finally asleep. You could talk, but you really don't even know what to say and you're not, you're not mad. There's nothing wrong, but you're also not feeling super connected, energy, energized, flirty, loving. It's just quiet at the end of the day. And you know, if I asked you, oh, so kinda like roommates, you might say, yeah, kinda like roommates, like we're there together then there isn't this big red flag, this big problem. And yet also the connection to each other is missing.

And I wouldn't even say that you probably feel like you're missing him in a sense because with roommate syndrome, if you want to call it that, you've gotten used to this, like this didn't just happen overnight. It's become your routine. So I hear this all of the time, we're not even fighting anymore, but it's because we barely talk with each other. Sometimes I will hear, I feel like a single mom, or I feel like I'm doing this family thing myself, even though he's technically there, or some version of that where the separation is present and yet you're not really sure how to describe it fully, but it's not exactly what you imagined as as how your marriage would be. And I want to say this really clearly here. This doesn't mean that your marriage is broken. In fact, I don't think it's ever helpful to label a marriage as broken, right? There's nothing to break if you think physically what that word means.

And so words are so powerful and impactful and when we label someone or something like ourselves or a marriage as broken, it feels so heavy and

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defeating and maybe there's even shame. And so your marriage isn't broken. There's no such thing as that. Let's not label it as that. But it may be time and this may be a sign that you need a reset. I think there is this common misconception, this myth that says we work on things when there is a problem. So you work on your marriage when there's a problem in your marriage, but I call BS on that. Let's work on things we care about. Like so many of the things in my life, parenting, for example, I became exceptional at from deep diving into learning and you know, enveloping myself in all of the different frameworks and content and you know, combining my coaching tools with it as well.

And I think working on it, taking the classes, taking the courses, reading the books is not because something was wrong, it's because I wanted the tools. I wanted to understand parenting. And the same can be true with respect to working on your marriage. It's not like working on your marriage because something is wrong is how you need to think about it. It's let's do some work on our marriage because why not? Because you genuinely care about it. Work on the things you care about, not because there's a problem. And it will change the way you work on it.

Because when you're working on something that's a problem, it is, um, fueled by fear and scarcity. So if you wait until something is really wrong when in your marriage and then you want to work on it, it can kind of feel graspy, it can feel so much harder. It can feel a lot like scarcity. And I say, okay, let's not wait and even see if that happens. And for most of you, at least for this specific podcast, it's not about that. Like, it's not even that you think it's headed in that direction. But why risk it? Let's just say, okay, I care about my marriage, I love my marriage, and because of that I want to work on it. Like work on things you care about just because you care about them, not because there's a problem.

So with respect to your spouse, notice how slowly this probably happened. It's not that it happened overnight. Maybe you or your husband pulled away after a stressful season, or maybe one of you is walking on eggshells to avoid more fights. Maybe you stop asking for what you want because it's

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easier to not be disappointed. Maybe it's a little bit different in your situation, but over time you settle into this quiet functional rhythm that looks fine on the outside, but it feels really lonely on the inside. So there's no huge explosion or betrayal. So you might be thinking, well he's such a good guy, we're just so busy with the kids, this is normal, right? I should just be grateful. But there's so much judgment in those thoughts. And the problem with that is that it's not helpful. It's not a helpful perspective or framework or mindset to increase connection.

So here's what I want to offer that this is so common, but it doesn't mean it has to stay this way. You didn't get married to be roommates, you didn't get married to just share a house and raise kids. You got married for partnership, for connection, for long lasting love, right? It sounds kind of cliché, but that's the truth. And I think that many of us, you know, say things like, let's stay together for the kids, right? In a situation where you might not think you would otherwise stay together. But what about doing the work for the kids? It's not just about staying together. What about working on your thoughts and your mindset and the connection and the romance? What about doing that? Yes, for your kids but also for yourself because that's really all you can control. So you can control whether and to what extent your kids pick up on any of this and how they're impacted and all of that.

But what you can do is do it for you and the person who you want to be. So what kind of wife do you want to be? You notice this pattern doesn't feel so great at the end of the day, you're sitting there scrolling, he's watching tv, no one's saying anything, talking about the logistics, 10 outta 10 times over and over and over. It's fine one day, right? But it's like over and over and over and you're like, oh my goodness, it's been weeks, months, years. You're not sure how long of this, maybe you've tried a date night here and there for a special occasion, or maybe it even has gotten up to a weekly date night. But other than that, it really is like you're operating like roommates. So the real problem isn't that you know, you are busy or tired, it's that you're stuck in this pattern and you don't really know how you got there and you don't really know how to shift out of it.

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Maybe it's, you know, becoming a mom that changed everything or maybe your kids are older and then it's the busyness of all of the activities or you know, maybe it's your spouse's work or your work, whatever it is that the circumstance changed or impacted the way that you reacted to that circumstance had the effect of leaving you and your spouse feeling like roommates. And so you're in this roommate dynamic thinking, okay, on the other side of this season, maybe it'll get better, but that's like someday syndrome. I just made that up. I think that's great. I'm going to use that someday syndrome, right? I talk about it a lot, especially in my Mastermind and with my private clients. It's like I as a coach am trying to get you to go from the someday mentality to the today mentality. It's a huge part of my job. So someday syndrome we're calling it is when you think, oh yeah, someday this will get better, someday I'll work on that someday fill in the blank.

So let's just shift that to right now. Today, most of us, including myself, we're not taught how to evolve as a couple alongside the growth that naturally happens in one's life, whether that's kids, homes, jobs, family, like we are growing humans and our lives are changing and evolving. And that's such a beautiful thing. But that means that the marriage dynamic will also shift and change and grow in some ways, in a lot of ways that aren't predictable. I love Esther Perel. She is a relationship therapist. She's very well known and she says that, you know, I'm going to kinda butcher this quote. I don't have the exact quote, but I've heard her say how, if you're lucky, you'll be married three times in your lifetime. It may or may not be to the same person. And she talks about how she's experienced that herself. And what she means by that is even if you stay married to the first person you married over the course of a 50 year marriage, it will feel like you were married multiple times because of the growth of each person in that marriage and of the couple.

So I don't know if you can relate to that, but I don't think you have to be married very long to know that your spouse is different and changes compared to when you met them compared to your dating courtship and compared to when you got married compared to now. And I don't think

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that's bad or wrong, I actually think it's by design. I think of marriage just like motherhood as a container for growth. And when you view it like that, you get out of the, the habit or the the pattern of thinking you married the wrong guy, right? I hear that sometimes it's like, oh my gosh, I don't know, my spouse changed, you know, maybe I married the wrong guy. And I just don't see an upside to that thought. 'cause it's just a thought. Even if you believe it to be true, it's a very painful thought because we don't have a time machine, we can't go back in time.

So instead, I like to find the most truthful empowering thought, like, oh, I didn't marry the wrong guy. I'm of course married the right guy, and this is the evolution of our growth of my spouse, of myself, and maybe it's going in a different direction than I ever anticipated. And this is what it's like to be married to this guy. I was always supposed to go through this. And now what? It's just much more empowering and present and future focused than being harsh and beating yourself up and critical. Okay? And that's usually, typically when I'm coaching beyond, roommate syndrome because that's usually when it's, you know, involving fighting and in disagreements and questioning the marriage itself. Roommate syndrome is more like the logistics and it's just that safety piece that we all want in a marriage that I learned from Esther Pearl as well, that I just love talking about, that safety piece that you need.

But if it becomes 100% of it, then that romance, that mystery, that other part of it completely diminishes. And you need both. And they're kind of opposites, which I love too, right? We, see this in, in many different ways in our lives. It's like what I talk about being an and woman and having the ambition and the slowness. Well, with respect to marriage, it's can you have that safety and that desire? You need both. Oftentimes, especially, you know, when you got kids at home, the safety piece expands and takes up 100% of the pie, and that desire piece really diminishes. And even after the kids are older, if you're so used to being in that safety piece, it can be hard to find that new phase as well of increasing the desire. And so just bring more awareness to the dynamic that you're in.

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And, it doesn't necessarily matter when it started, but it does matter how you're thinking about it now and how much attention and awareness you bring to it and just noticing it without blaming your spouse, without blaming your kids, without blaming this season, without blaming, you know, anything, right? I think oftentimes we find ourselves in this cycle of like, okay, we're, we have to have someone to blame for everything. So it's like, either my spouse is to blame for this, or I'm to blame, or the kids are to blame, or the house is to blame, or the seasons to blame. It's like there's gotta be something or someone to blame and I just don't think that's helpful. What if this isn't a situation where we want to blame someone or something for it, and instead it's just something we want to notice, we want to accept, increase our awareness around, and then use tools and frameworks and psychology backed coaching to change like that is so amazing.

And that's exactly what I'm teaching in the new class inside the Mom On Purpose Membership. It's called the Marriage Reset Course, and it is going to help you with this exact situation. So one of the women I worked with recently said something I'll never forget. She said, "we used to fight all of the time, then we stopped. I thought it was progress, but now it just feels like he doesn't care." She was exhausted from carrying the emotional load and kind of felt invisible or lonely. So inside the Membership, she started applying a few of the tools that I teach. And here is what happened. She stopped trying to get him to change and started shifting how she showed up in the relationship.

She stopped focusing her attention on what was wrong with her spouse and feeling like she was always judging her spouse and being so critical she stopped trying to fix everything and control everything and overexplain everything and trying to get him to be different. You've heard me talk about before, how do I get my spouse to, how do I get my child to, it's like get my child mode or get my spouse mode that is rooted in control. And once she brought more awareness to how she was showing up, she started reconnecting with herself. She started meeting her own needs, and she started focusing on giving to the relationship without needing his

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permission, without needing him to do anything, without expecting him to change. She changed first. And I hear you, my friend, like, why do I have to do the work? I get it, but the work isn't for someone else's benefit.

It's not like you do the work and he gets the benefit of it. You do the work and you get the benefit of it. I have been there where I felt crazy and controlling and critical and harsh and judgmental, and it's not a fun time. And when you do this work, you lighten it up and you can feel feminine and free and connected and engaged. I coach a lot of women who say like, I've been married to my spouse for 18 years, 20 years, 25 years. And you know, it just feels like kind of the spark is gone again. It's like that roommate syndrome, nothing's wrong, but the spark is gone and they think mistakenly that they know everything there is to know about their spouse and that we're just comfortable. But that's a lie. That is a lie because your brain is focusing on the past.

Yes, you know a lot about your spouse from the past and you certainly know all of the parts where you were a participant in them, but you don't know where your spouse is going. You don't know his future. You don't know what all of his goals and fears and desires are. There's so much to talk about and connect with, with respect to the future and what hasn't happened yet. And I say that hesitantly because I hear some of you saying, my spouse is the quiet one. Like he's not going to want to talk about that. I get it. My spouse also is a little bit more quiet. But there are things that your spouse really does like, like my spouse loves, like going out and having new adventures and doing things together. And you can think about that in a fun desirable way, in a way that creates curiosity and mystery and connection and desire by focusing on the present and the future.

Because you haven't had these adventures yet. You haven't gone out and done all of the things you haven't done yet. It's not like life is a game and you've just finished the game. It's like complete. There's nothing left to do with your spouse or nothing left to talk about. That's not true at all. It's just that you're in the habit of focusing on the responsibilities, the logistics, doing the routines. You know, it's, it's focusing on that safety part. And what

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you want to do is focus a little bit more on the desire part. And so in the example I was talking about with my client, she completely transformed her marriage by doing the work herself. And it did not transform overnight. Okay? That's not what this is about. But her tone softened. She felt more feminine and grounded and she let things go. She felt like she was having her needs met.

She did want deeper conversations. And so she got that need met elsewhere, right? With a girlfriend instead of putting that expectation on her spouse and instead started connecting with him in different ways that they both liked. And over the course of some time, right? We worked together on this for, I don't know, six months or so. Everything changed so much more intimacy. And intimacy doesn't just mean physical intimacy, right? It's, it's mental intimacy. It's like intellectual. It's emotional. It's all of the different ways that we connect beyond the physical. And it's not the chicken or the egg. It's aligning with who do I want to be as a wife? So my friend, you did not marry the wrong guy. You do not need a new husband. There's nothing wrong with your marriage if you are in roommate syndrome or kind of feeling like things could be better.

You are doing life with another human being. And that can bring up challenges. Challenges that just require new tools because when you learn how to ship the dynamic without controlling, without kind of that nagging or that that fear-based fixation on your spouse, on wanting them to change, everything else opens up. You feel so empowered. And no, this is not about doing more work. It's about becoming a woman who leads herself in her marriage differently, more intentionally from her femininity, from her calm, from who she wants to be, from her vision of connection, not from reactivity.

You can feel heard, you can feel supported, you can feel desire. So many of my clients have told me they feel desire only in certain situations based on the the other person. That is not how I teach desire at all. The way I teach. It tends to break people's brains, in the best way. And it's focused on you creating that desire for you. And that is a really good time. So do not wait for a crisis. Do not wait for something to be really wrong. Work on your

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marriage just because you want to work on your marriage. This will give you tools to put in your tool belt that you can pull out anytime you want to increase that desire. Anytime you want a marriage reset, anytime you want to feel connected, because here is the truth, my friend, that roommate dynamic.

It doesn't stay neutral. You know this, it turns into what resentment, oftentimes distance maybe. How would you describe it? Because if you don't intentionally reset your marriage, the default will become survival mode. You stop trying, he stops trying. You both become somewhat strangers, but you're co-parenting together, living together. Again, it's kind of like roommates. If this resonates with you, if you're nodding along right now, please do not ignore it. Join me inside the Mom On Purpose membership. This month's brand new class is the Marriage Reset class. And I will walk you through how to stop living like roommates, how to stop fighting over the same things and break that pattern, break that dance that you're in, how to rekindle the romance even if it's been a while, to increase that desire for your sake. How to start feeling heard, understood, and supported. This is not magic.

I do not focus on changing the other person. This is not therapy, as you know. This is about you being the wife who you want to be in your marriage. You will feel completely different after taking this class and applying these tools and frameworks. This is work that I'm so grateful for in my own marriage and in the clients who I've helped with their marriages. It's been truly transformational. Come on in, get The Marriage Reset Class now inside the Mom On Purpose Membership, momonpurpose.com/coaching, and I will see you inside. Take care of my friend.

Thank you for being here and listening. Now, head on over to momonpurpose.com/coaching to learn more about the Mom On Purpose Membership, where we take all of this work to the next level.